

High-flying winner backing annual business awards

CHIEF REPORTER

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A past winner at Epsom's business awards, who recently won a major contract with Mothercare, is urging companies to follow in her footsteps.

Paula Dixon, 34, from Epsom, founder of Jellybugs, a soft play area and cafe that was set up in the Harrier Centre, West Ewell, in 2009, was awarded the best overall business and best small independent business gongs at the first awards ceremony in 2011.

And her company has now won a contract to open soft



Winner: Paula Dixon KT17460

play areas and cafes in Mothercare stores across the country.

A judge for this year's Epsom and Ewell Business Awards, which are sponsored by the Epsom Guardian, she is urging people to nominate businesses and individuals before the deadline on September 30.

Mrs Dixon, a mother-of-five, said: "The benefit of being part of the awards was that we were taken seriously in the local business community – soft play is not like running an accountancy firm.

"It was good to have recognition and the support of MP Chris Grayling, and raise awareness to increase our footprint. It's also good for the customers to know we have been awarded something like that."

Explaining how she got the Mothercare contract, she said: "I found the email address for the new chief executive and contacted him directly to pitch the idea. Then I went to the head office and met them.

"Part of the turnaround plan for Mothercare was to install soft play areas in the stores.



Gathering: The launch of the Epsom and Ewell Business Awards earlier this summer, with MP Chris Grayling and Epsom Guardian editor Sean Duggan in the centre EP85444

"I'm very proud and overwhelmed to see the Jellybugs name on the store and almost become a household name. It's nice that all your hard work finally pays off."

The first two play areas will be installed in stores in Gateshead and Solihull in the next few weeks, with the Jellybugs signage and brand to be put outside the stores.

Jellybugs is now based in Kingston's Rotunda complex,

but can no longer be found in Ewell. Mrs Dixon is looking for larger premises in the Epsom area.

The Epsom and Ewell Business Awards are open to all businesses and individual traders working within the borough, whether well established or new to Epsom and Ewell, Ashtead, Nork and Tattenhams.

There are nine award categories – best overall business;

commitment to the community; customer service; best business personality; best new business; best business in Epsom and Epsom Downs; best business in Ewell and Stoneleigh; best business in Ashtead and best young entrepreneur.

The awards will be presented by Chris Grayling MP at a ceremony on November 20.

Nominate now at epsombusinessawards.co.uk.

Showtime for shop

A charity shop is holding its fourth annual catwalk show, that promises "fashion and fun" in the heart of Banstead.

Staff from the Cancer Research UK shop in Banstead High Street organise the fashion show every year and raised £3,000 a year ago.

Volunteer Genevieve Hart-trup said: "Two managers and lots of volunteers work very hard to put this together and we are hoping to raise even more this year.

"We have a raffle too, which has some fantastic prizes donated by our local businesses, and it is a fantastic evening of fashion and fun, all raising money for a great charity."

The event is taking place in the Banstead Village Club, Lamborn Place, Banstead High Street, tonight.

Doors open at 6.30pm, and the fashion show starts at 7pm.

Tickets cost £8, including a glass of wine.

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